Workshop-cum-Training programme on ‘Making of Traditional Sal Leaf Plate’ from September 23 to October 7, 2015

A workshop-cum-training programme on ‘Making of Traditional Sal leaf plates’ has been organised at Ramnagar village of Birbhum district, West Bengal from 23.9.2015 to 7.10.2015 by the Eastern Regional Centre, Kolkata. Altogether forty participants from the Santal community were trained up. Sal leaf plates (*patava*) are very popular in the area for feasts on the social and religious occasions. For the Santals collection of Sal leaves as minor forest produces is a traditional subsidiary activity for the livelihood besides agricultural activities. The women-folk of Ramnagar village used to go for collection of Sal *sakem* (leaves) in group to the nearby Ilumbazar Choupahari forest.

Collected leaves are kept overnight in storing room so that the leaves become soft. Next day the leaves are stitched with the help of charej (thin sticks usually taken out of the finer tender branches of *neem* tree or *Bena/seram*, a type of grass) or kutchi (a hard type of wild grass). Besides, other tree twigs like that of *babool, minjhri, kunchu* etc. are also used for stitching. Usually for an eight inch plate eight to ten leaves are arranged in circular fashion and stitched. However, plates may be of different sizes. Charej/kutchi are collected from the nearby forests or from pastures in their locality. With leaf plates they also make kuruk (leaf bowl). The plates are to be sun dried before taken into use. *Patava* and kuruk are used for keeping sacred oil, *sindur* (vermillion), and raw rice etc. during worship.

Under the training programme the participants were taught to stitch the plates and bowl with the sewing machine and shape them with hot pressure machine. This type of plates has a higher market value. All the trainees showed eagerness to learn their traditional technique as well as the new technique which will add some more earnings to their livelihood. The programme was a grand success.

**Photographs:**

![Inaugurating the Workshop](image1)

![Collection of Sal leaf (*sakem*)](image2)

![Stacking of collected leaves](image3)

![Collection of Sal leaves to village](image4)
Stitching of leaves for preparing plates

Drying up of leaf plates and Kutchi

Flattening of leaf plates

Stitching of sal leaf plates-new technique

Mechanised pressure machine